

ST. NICHOLAS WEEKLY BULLETIN MARCH 1, 2020

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

GREAT LENT begins tomorrow, March 2ND.

THE WEDNESDAY PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGIES will begin this Wednesday, March 4th. We'll be rotating the celebration of this Lenten Liturgy among our sister Orthodox Churches in the area. Plan on attending these services. Set aside your Wednesday evenings and use this as one way to spiritually prepare for Pascha. Each Liturgy will start at 6:00 pm. Check out the full schedule in the Bulletin. There is a "potluck" Lenten meal after the service. **The first PreSanctified Liturgy will be held at St. Spyridon Cathedral.**

SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY VESPERS will be held on **Saturday, March 7TH at 6:00PM** at St. George Cathedral on Anna Street in Worcester. His Grace Bishop John will be the prime celebrant. **Please mark your calendars.**

FOOD PANTRY. Help is needed to staff our responsibility at the Orthodox Food Center **this Saturday, February 29TH, from 9 AM-NOON**, as well as the **following Saturday, March 7TH.** About 4 people are needed. Likewise, donations of food are always needed, and may be dropped off at the Food Pantry housed at St. Spyridon Cathedral. If you can

GREETERS TEAM 3:
SEAN FAHEY AND MARGARITE LANDRY

COFFEE HOUR CLEAN-UP:
HELP NEEDED
PICK UP A CUP - LEND A HAND

ALL ALTAR SERVERS INVITED



CHEESE-FARE SUNDAY

SUNDAY OF FORGIVENESS — THE CASTING OUT OF ADAM & EVE FROM PARADISE

APOSTOLIC READING: ROMANS 13:11-14:4 ☩ **GOSPEL: MATTHEW 6:14-21**

TONE 4 ☩ **MATINS GOSPEL 4**

help in this worthwhile ministry, please speak with Lisa Mielnicki or Nicole Apostola.

TODAY IS MISSION SUNDAY. What better way to approach our journey toward Pascha than to pray for and support the Church's mission to share the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ with the world! **On March 1ST** please say a prayer for Orthodox Missions and Orthodox Missionaries serving around the world, consider volunteering to serve as part of an Orthodox Mission Team, and support this eternal work of the Church with a gift to the Mission Center. **For more information or to get involved, visit the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) website: www.ocmc.org, e-mail: missions@ocmc.org, or call 1-877-463-6784.**

COFFEE HOUR SPONSORS ARE NEEDED for the coming weeks. Please speak with Presvytera Maria if you would like to sponsor one.

TODAY WE CELEBRATE A MEMORIAL for the servant of God, **Nikolaos Karadimitriou**, father of **Kosmas Karadimitriou**, fallen asleep 40-days. **May our good and loving Lord rest his soul with the righteous!**

DATES TO REMEMBER

Thurs, Feb 27	Pita Baking, 9AM-NOON
Sat, Feb 29	Staff Food Pantry 9AM-NOON
Sun, March 1	Cheesefare/Forgiveness Sunday
Mon, March 2	Great Lent begins
Wed, March 4	PreSanctified, St. Spyridon, 6PM
Sat, March 7	Staff Food Pantry 9AM-NOON
	Sun of Orthodoxy Vespers, 6PM
Wed, March 11	PreSanctified, St. Mary, 6PM
Wed, March 18	PreSanctified, St. George, 6PM
Sun, April 19	Great and Holy Pascha

34 GOLD STREET, SHREWSBURY, MA 01545-6238 ♦ VOICE: 508.845.0088 ♦ FAX: 508.845.8850

E-MAIL: FRNICK@STNICHOLASCHURCH.ORG ♦ WEB: WWW.STNICHOLASCHURCH.ORG

A Parish of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas

TODAY'S COFFEE HOUR is sponsored by the Karadimitriou family in memory of Nikolaos.

HOLY TRINITY NEWS

THE FEBRUARY ISSUE of the Holy Trinity Times may be downloaded at: www.htnr.net. Click on "Newsletter." Also, subscribe to the Holy Trinity e-mail list. And, 'like' Holy Trinity on Facebook and Twitter.

In January Holy Trinity conducted its first **Long Term Resident Satisfaction Survey**. The residents gave a 75% satisfaction rating and 75% would recommend us to others. Holy Trinity is working to improve resident satisfaction and this survey helps to better understand improvement opportunities.

JOB OPENING: Dietary Cook & Aid, 30 hours. Contact Dietary Director, Maria Ruiz at 508-852-1000 ext. 220.

Holy Trinity provides a comprehensive rehabilitation program of **Physical, Occupational and Speech/Language Therapies**. For info call: 508-852-1000.

DIVINE LITURGY is celebrated every Wednesday morning at 9:30AM. And please always keep Holy Trinity Nursing Home, it's staff, directors, residents, and families in your prayers. And remember: you can always visit!

HOLY TRINITY is a non-profit skilled nursing and rehabilitation center and a project of the Council of Orthodox Churches of Central MA. Please keep Holy Trinity in your prayers and in your charitable plans. Contributions to the Treasured Generations Annual Fund may be made at: www.htnr.net. Volunteers are welcomed and needed. Contact: Dana Spinney, Activities Director, at 508-852-1000 or e-mail: dspinney@htnr.net.

Youth Vacation Week Snow Tubing Event



THE PRAYER OF ST. EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN

O Lord and master of my life! Dispel from me the spirit of discouragement and slothfulness, of ambition and vain talk!

Instead, give me the spirit of prudence and humility, of patience and charity.

Yes, my king and Lord, let me look at my own sins and refrain from judging others: For you are blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

A PRAYER OF FR. LAURENCE

LET US PRAY TO THE LORD,

AT TIMES, O forgiving Lord, it is difficult not to harbor grudges when we have been offended by treacherous speech and hurt by words that bruise our pride. We desire to rid ourselves of such feelings, but our own powers are not up to the task. Nor would we want, in any case, to rely solely on our own strength. You yourself must give us what we need to purify our minds and hearts, to dispel all these negative sentiments, lest we perish for breeding and nurturing them.

For blest and glorified is your most honorable and magnificent name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: now and forever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

LIVE HONORABLY, AS IN THE DAY

TOMORROW we begin Great Lent. The Scripture readings chosen for this Forgiveness Sunday are meant to give us some guidance as we set out. In the Gospel of Matthew (6:14-21) the Lord tells us to forgive one another, as well as to fast with joy and in secret. In the selection we read from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans (13:11-14:4) we also receive some sound advice on the proper way to approach the Fast. As a way to steel the resolve of the Roman Christians, he reminds them of the sleep and darkness from which they have emerged, and the day of salvation that draws every closer. He also counsels them not to judge how and what people eat — this is an echo from last week's reading from First Corinthians.

One of the powerful themes during Lent, especially at both the beginning and end, is the Lord's return — His Second Coming. Not only did we hear of this in the last Sunday's Gospel lesson, but the same subject was also present in all of the weekday readings during the past two weeks. Many of these same readings, as well as others on the Lord's Coming, will be read during Holy Week.

As Christians we experience and live the reality of the Kingdom on two levels. The first is in the changed reality we now live because Jesus our Savior has come. St. Paul reminds the Romans of this in the first part of today's reading. The second level is the expectation of the Lord's coming-again. We await the great day of judgment when the Lord will come in glory. Then everything and everyone will be sorted out. This is the Judgment spoken of in last week's Gospel reading.

When we hear words like 'sleep' and 'waking' or 'night' and 'day', these are used as metaphors to give us a way to understand a deeper spiritual reality: our movement from captivity by evil, to freedom in Christ. So, St. Paul tells the Romans: "You know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers;

the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light" (v. 11-12). The early Christians (including St. Paul) believed that the Lord would be coming again soon. In addition, everyone in these communities was a convert to faith in Jesus Christ. Both the darkness they had left and the day drawing near were very palpable to them. It is hard to feel this same immediacy for us who have grown up with the Good News of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, part of our objective during Lent is to heighten and deepen within us the experiences of which St. Paul speaks.

St. Paul next turns to how we should actually live here and now: "Let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires" (v. 13-14). It would be easy to interpret these lines as St. Paul being 'prudish,' but this is not the case. St. John Chrysostom says that St. Paul is not speaking against normal partying, drinking, socializing or conjugal relations. He is warning us against the excesses of these that lead us to pervert our true human nature — our nature in Christ.

The Fast is meant as a time for us to regain our sense of who we are and what we are called to be. To "live honorably as in the day" is to embrace our true selves — who God created us to be and to which He calls us again.

The second theme in this week's reading concerns judgment: that is, forming opinions about and criticizing others. He uses the same categories of 'weak' and 'strong' as he did when writing to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 8:8ff). This suggests that the matter of whether or not a Christian could or should eat food offered to idols was being discussed in Churches throughout the ancient world. While today we might not face the question of food offered to pagan gods, we do have the

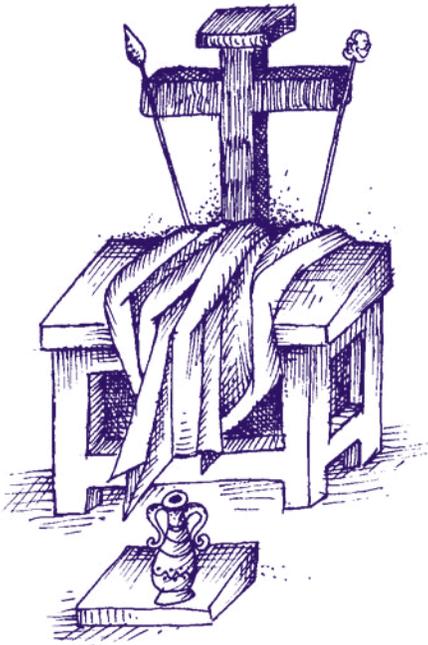
Church's fasting rules that present a similar spiritual challenge.

St. Paul says: "Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand" (v. 14:1-4).

The first thing that strikes us is that the 'weak' are eating vegetables, and the 'strong' are eating freely. Our fasting rules are the absolute inverse: the strong are those who abstain and the weak are eating freely. Fasting is an important spiritual discipline, but it is our own personal discipline. We fast not because God needs our fasting, but rather because we need to change our focus from our stomach and desires, to the deeper reality of our love for God and His love for us. When we are tied down to the things of earth, it is hard to ascend toward Heaven.

Because fasting requires us to be disciplined, it is very easy to fall into the sin of pride. We may feel our fasting deserves some recognition, by God and others. We can feel we are better than those who do not fast, or, do not fast rigorously. But, "who are you to pass judgment on servants of another?" Our fasting is our own, something private between us and God. Our good works are our own, a secret between us and God. Our prayer is our own, the quiet conversation we have with our Lord. But, may each of us grow together during this time of the Fast, and so be worthy, together with all our brothers and sisters, to see the Light of Christ's Resurrection.

FR. NICHOLAS APOSTOLA



PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGIES

2020

Wednesday, March 4, 2020

St. Spyridon

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

St. Mary

Wednesday, March 18, 2020

St. George

Wednesday, March 25, 2020

St. Nicholas

Wednesday, April 1, 2020

Sts. Anagyroi

Wednesday, April 8, 2020

St. Nicholas

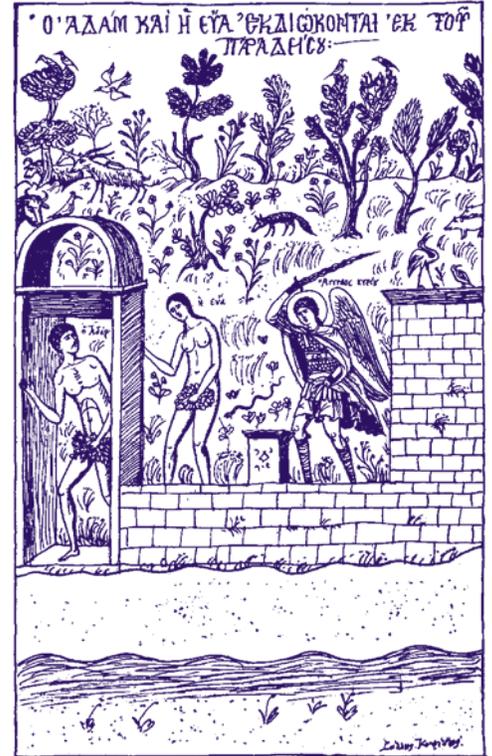
Each Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts will begin at 6:00 p.m. The faithful should prepare themselves for Holy Communion in the usual way: prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and regular confession. There will be a modest 'pot-luck' lenten meal offered after the Liturgy. People are encouraged to bring something to share with others.

EXPLANATIONS FROM THE LENTEN TRIODION

THE SUNDAY BEFORE LENT. The last of the preparatory Sundays has two themes: it commemorates Adam's expulsion from Paradise, and it is also the Sunday of Forgiveness. There are obvious reasons why these two things should be brought to our attention as we stand on the threshold of the Great Fast. One of the primary images in the Triodion is that of the return to Paradise. Lent is a time when we weep with Adam and Eve before the closed gate of Eden, repenting with them for the sins that have deprived us of our free communion with God. But Lent is also a time when we are preparing to celebrate the saving event of Christ's death and rising, which has reopened Paradise to us once more (Luke 23:43). So sorrow for our exile in sin is tempered by hope of our re-entry into Paradise:

O precious Paradise, unsurpassed in beauty,
Tabernacle built by God, unending gladness and delight,
Glory of the righteous, joy of the prophets, and dwelling of the saints,
With the sound of thy leaves pray to the Maker of all:
May He open unto me the gates which I closed by my transgression,
And may He count me worthy to partake of the Tree of Life
And of the joy which was mine when I dwelt in thee before.

Note how the Triodion speaks here not of 'Adam' but of 'me': 'May He open unto me the gates which I closed'. Here, as throughout the Triodion, the events of sacred history are not treated as happenings in the distant past or future, but as experiences undergone by me here and now within the dimension of sacred time.



The second theme, that of forgiveness, is emphasized in the Gospel reading for this Sunday (Matthew 6:14-21) and in the special ceremony of mutual forgiveness at the end of Vespers on Sunday evening. Before we enter the Lenten fast, we are reminded that there can be no true fast, no genuine repentance, no reconciliation with God, unless we are at the same time reconciled with one another. A fast without mutual love is the fast of demons. As the commemoration of the ascetic saints on the previous Saturday has just made clear to us, we do not travel the road of Lent as isolated individuals but as members of a family. Our asceticism and fasting should not separate us from our fellow men but link us to them with ever stronger bonds. The Lenten ascetic is called to be a person for others.



THE RULES OF FASTING

Within this developed pattern of Lent, what precisely do the rules of fasting demand? Neither in ancient nor in modern times has there ever been exact uniformity, but most Orthodox authorities agree on the following rules:

- (1) During the week between the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee and that of the Prodigal Son, there is a general dispensation from all fasting. Meat and animal products may be eaten even on Wednesday and Friday.
- (2) In the following week, often termed the 'Week of Carnival', the usual fast is kept on Wednesday and Friday. Otherwise there is no special fasting.
- (3) In the Week before Lent, meat is forbidden, but eggs, cheese and other dairy products may be eaten on all days, including Wednesday and Friday.
- (4) On weekdays (Monday to Friday inclusive) during the seven weeks of Lent, there are restrictions both on the number of meals taken daily and on the types of food permitted; but when a meal is allowed, there is no fixed limitation on the quantity of food to be eaten.
 - (a) On weekdays in the first week, fasting is particularly severe. According to the strict observance, in the course of the five initial days of Lent, only two meals are eaten, one on Wednesday and the other on Friday, in both cases after the Liturgy of the Presanctified. On the other three days, those who have the strength are encouraged to keep an absolute fast; those for whom this proves impracticable may eat on Tuesday and Thursday (but not, if possible, on Monday), in the evening after Vespers, when they may take bread and water, or perhaps tea or fruit-juice, but not a cooked meal. It should be added at once that in practice today these rules are commonly relaxed. At the meals on Wednesday and Friday xerophagy is prescribed. Literally this means 'dry eating'. Strictly interpreted, it signifies that we may eat only vegetables cooked with water and salt, and also such things as fruit, nuts, bread and honey. In practice, octopus and shell-fish are also allowed on days of xerophagy; likewise vegetable margarine and corn or other vegetable

oil, not made from olives. But the following categories of food are definitely excluded:

- (i) meat;
 - (ii) animal products (cheese, milk, butter, eggs, lard, dripping);
 - (iii) fish (i.e. fish with backbones);
 - (iv) oil (i.e. olive oil) and wine (i.e. all alcoholic drinks).
- (b) On weekdays (Monday to Friday inclusive) in the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth weeks, one meal a day is permitted, to be taken in the afternoon following Vespers, and at this one meal xerophagy is to be observed.
- (c) Holy Week. On the first three days there is one meal each day, with xerophagy; but some try to keep a complete fast on these days, or else they eat only uncooked food, as on the opening days of the first week.

On Holy Thursday one meal is eaten, with wine and oil (i.e. olive oil).

On Great Friday those who have the strength follow the practice of the early Church and keep a total fast. Those unable to do this may eat bread, with a little water, tea or fruit-juice, but not until sunset, or at any rate not until after the veneration of the Epitaphion at Vespers.

On Holy Saturday there is in principle no meal, since according to the ancient practice after the end of the Liturgy of St. Basil the faithful remained in church for the reading of the Acts of the Apostles, and for their sustenance were given a little bread and dried fruit, with a cup of wine. If, as usually happens now, they return home for a meal, they may use wine but not oil; for on this one Saturday, alone among the Saturdays of the year, olive oil is not permitted.

The rule of xerophagy is relaxed on the following days:

- (1) On Saturdays and Sundays in Lent, with the exception of Holy Saturday, two main meals may be taken in the usual way, around mid-day and in the evening, with wine and olive oil; but meat, animal products and fish are not allowed.
- (2) On the Feast of the Annunciation (25 March) and Palm Sunday, fish is permitted as well as wine and oil, but meat and animal products are not allowed. If the Feast of the Annunciation falls on the first four days of Holy Week, wine and oil are permitted but not fish. If it falls on

Great Friday or Holy Saturday, wine is permitted, but not fish or oil.

- (3) Wine and oil are permitted on the following days, if they fall on a weekday in the second, third, fourth, fifth or sixth week:
 - First and Second Finding of the Head of St. John the Baptist (24 February)
 - Holy Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (9 March)
 - Forefeast of the Annunciation (24 March)
 - Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel (26 March)
 - Patronal festival of the Church or Monastery
- (4) Wine and oil are also allowed on Wednesday and Thursday in the fifth week, because of the vigil for the Great Canon. Wine is allowed—and, according to some authorities, oil as well—on Friday in the same week, because of the vigil for the Akathistos Hymn.

It has always been held that these rules of fasting should be relaxed in the case of anyone elderly or in poor health. In present-day practice, even for those in good health, the full strictness of the fast is usually mitigated. Only a few Orthodox today attempt to keep a total fast on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday in the first week, or on the first three days in Holy Week. On weekdays—except, perhaps, during the first week or Holy Week—it is now common to eat two cooked meals daily instead of one. From the second until the sixth week, many Orthodox use wine, and perhaps oil also, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and less commonly on Mondays as well. Permission is often given to eat fish in these weeks. Personal factors need to be taken into account, as for example the situation of an isolated Orthodox living in the same household as non-Orthodox, or obliged to take meals in a factory or school canteen. In cases of uncertainty each should seek the advice of his or her spiritual father. At all times it is essential to bear in mind that 'you are not under the law but under grace' (Rom. 6:14), and that 'the letter kills, but the spirit gives life' (2 Cor. 3:6). The rules of fasting, while they need to be taken seriously, are not to be interpreted with dour and pedantic legalism; 'for the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Rom. 14:17).

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K. Ware with Mother Mary (Trans.), *The Lenten Triodion* (pp. 35–37). South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press.